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S E C R E T ROME 000549

SIPDIS

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DEPT FOR EUR (STEPHENS), EUR/SCE (GREGORIAN), S/WCI  
(PROSPER)  
TREASURY FOR OFAC (NEWCOMB)

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SUBJECT: OPERATION BALKAN VICE III - ITALY ON BOARD WITH  
VISA BAN, WILL "BE CREATIVE" ON ASSET FREEZE

REF: STATE 27291

CLASSIFIED BY: POLMINCOUNS TOM COUNTRYMAN. REASON: 1.5 (B)(D).

1. (S) MFA BALKANS OFFICE DIRECTOR FERNANDO GENTILINI TOLD POLOFF ON FEBRUARY 12 THAT ITALY WAS "ON BOARD" WITH USG VIEW THAT IMPOSING TRAVEL ENTRY/TRAVEL BANS AND FREEZING ASSETS OF PIFWC'S AND THEIR MATERIAL SUPPORTERS ARE IMPORTANT TOOLS FOR ACHIEVING OUR SHARED OBJECTIVE TO STABILIZE THE REGION. IMPLEMENTING TRAVEL RESTRICTIONS ON THE INDIVIDUALS NAMED IN REF A WOULD POSE LITTLE PROBLEM, HE SAID, AND PROMISED TO TRANSMIT THE LIST TO APPROPRIATE BORDER AND IMMIGRATION AUTHORITIES.

2. (S) GENTILINI SAID THAT AS WITH PREVIOUS REQUESTS OF THIS TYPE, ASSET FREEZE WOULD NOT BE THAT STRAIGHT FORWARD. A NUMBER OF EU MEMBER STATES CONTINUE TO HOLD THAT FREEZING ASSETS OF PIFWC SUPPORTERS WITHOUT CRIMINAL OR CIVIL PROCEEDINGS WOULD NOT STAND UP IN THE COURTS. THAT SAID, ITALY WOULD CONTINUE TO "BE CREATIVE" IN ATTEMPTS TO FREEZE ASSETS OF PIFWC SUPPORTERS. GENTILINI SAID THAT AT THE FEBRUARY 12 COWEB IN BRUSSELS, ITALY SUPPORTED IRISH PRESIDENCY PROPOSALS TO "TEST THE WATERS" ON ASSET FREEZE WITH THE THREE UNSCR 1503-NAMED INDICTEES - KARADZIC, MLADIC, AND GOTOVINA. AN EU WIDE ASSET FREEZE AGAINST THESE THREE MAY GAIN UNANIMOUS MEMBER STATE SUPPORT AND STAND UP IN THE COURTS, PAVING THE WAY FOR ACTIONS AGAINST "LESS SERIOUS" PIFWC SUPPORTERS. GENTILINI SAID THAT HE WOULD EXPLORE POSSIBLE BILATERAL ACTION, BUT DID NOT HOLD OUT MUCH HOPE FOR THAT STRATEGY.

3. (S) ROBERTO CICIANI, DIRECTOR OF THE OFFICE OF MONEY LAUNDERING AND FINANCIAL CRIMES, SAID THAT WITHOUT AN EU IMPLEMENTING DIRECTIVE, THE GOI CAN NOT FREEZE ASSETS OF THE INDIVIDUALS LISTED IN REFTTEL. FINANCE WILL SHARE THE NAMES WITH THE CENTRAL BANK'S UFFICIO ITALIANO DEI CAMBI, WHICH WILL, IN TURN, INSTRUCT BANKS TO SEARCH DATABASES TO SEE IF THERE ARE MATCHES OF ACCOUNTS. THIS WOULD BE DONE IN ANTICIPATION OF AN EU DIRECTIVE. FINANCE WILL ASK THE MINISTRIES OF JUSTICE AND INTERIOR TO DETERMINE IF THERE HAVE BEEN ANY JUDICIAL RULINGS IN ITALY AGAINST THE LISTED INDIVIDUALS.

SEMBLER

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